

THE AMERICAN NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 4, Vol. XXIII.

APRIL, 1849.

Whole No. 369.

SERMON CCCCXCVII.

BY REV. GIDEON N. JUDD, D.D.

Catskill, New York.

THE MAGNANIMITY OF THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT.

"And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit! And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."—Acts 7 : 59, 60.

THIS brief record of the death of the first martyr to Christianity is a complete refutation of one objection, which its enemies have urged against it. They have asserted, and often with an air of triumph, not merely that its doctrines are absurd, but that its spirit is degrading to the dignity of human nature. In their estimation, the lofty aspirations of ambition, the indignant spirit, which kindles at every affront or injury, and visits it with implacable resentment, and the sanguinary exploits of renowned conquerors, constitute the elements of true greatness. Hence the homage, which in all ages, has been paid to the daring enterprises of cupidity and ambition; the prompt and cheerful obedience, which has been rendered to the laws of honor, falsely so-called; the indignant infliction of evil for evil, and the valor and skill which have been displayed in waging sanguinary wars. Those who place these achievements, and the spirit which prompts them, among the characteristics of true greatness, in the temper and morality which the gospel inculcates see nothing to admire. Its devout, meek, patient, and forgiving spirit, they consider not adapted to *elevate*, but to *depress* men in the scale of true dignity and greatness. That this sentiment is false, and fraught with danger to the temporal and eternal interests of men, we hope to make evident.

We have not time to notice all the distinctive features of the Christian spirit. We shall confine our attention mainly to those which entitle it to the character of genuine magnanimity. We

cannot accomplish this purpose, however, without subserving another of amazing moment to the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus. It will furnish them with a safe criterion of character—a test by which the validity of their claims to membership in His family may be tried.

What, then, are the elements of true greatness,—of real magnanimity,—embraced in the spirit which the gospel inculcates, and which instrumentally it originates and sustains?

I. Its greatness is shown by the victories which it achieves over the corrupt affections of the human heart. The existence of these affections is denied by few, even of those who withhold their assent from the statements of the Bible respecting the *extent* of native depravity. By the unsparing censures which they pass upon those who give unbridled indulgence to impure and malevolent passions, they make it abundantly evident that they believe in their existence. Nay, many attest their existence in their own bosoms, by pleading in self-justification their inability to control them.

None who profess the Christian spirit, doubt that by nature there dwelleth no good thing in them;—that the heart, unsanctified by the Spirit of God, “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” With them, the corruption of the heart is a matter of painful consciousness. From the pollution and power of sin, they pant to be delivered; but all human expedients for its expulsion, are vain. Philosophers and uninspired moralists have given wise rules for the government of the appetites and passions. The authority of human law has restrained from acts of impurity, fraud, and violence. But neither the teachings of philosophy, nor the authority of law, nor both combined, have *eradicated* the passions which prompt to deeds of evil. And they have often been insufficient to hold them in check. To cleanse the corrupt fountain whence issue the streams of pollution and misery, which desolates families, societies, and nations, they have done nothing. They have never expelled from human bosoms, selfishness, pride, envy, impure affections, the inordinate love of the world, repining under the afflictive dispensations of Providence, and enmity toward God or man. All that human wisdom and power have been able to do, is merely to *restrain* the grosser ebullitions of depravity.

The expulsive power of the Christian spirit has done more. By its introduction into the heart, its native darkness and impurity have been partially expelled; its pride, selfishness, and inordinate attachment to things earthly, have been diminished; and it has been expanded with benevolence, not toward *friends* merely, but *foes*, and love and devotion to God. Imperfect as is the degree of it in the present life, by its introduction into their hearts, its subjects are wonderfully transformed. Old things pass away,

and all things become new. The passionate become meek, the fraudulent just, the niggardly generous, the intemperate sober, the violent gentle, the impure chaste, the profane prayerful and devout, and the vindictive forgiving. The worshippers of mammon, by its transforming power, become spiritually-minded, and "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

What we have said concerning the purifying efficacy of the Christian spirit, is not disproved by the fact that those who give decisive evidence that they possess a measure of it, often give mournful proof of remaining depravity. In this life they are but *partially* sanctified. Nor is the fact of the change wrought in the heart by this spirit set aside or weakened by the admission, that many who profess to have received it exhibit none of its celestial fruits in the life. An apostle has taught us, that "they are not all Israel that are of Israel." "But what is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?" No fact is more clearly established than that multitudes of all ages, from the little child to the old man leaning upon his staff—of every grade of intellect and of all ranks and conditions—in every period of time, and in every condition of society, *have* experienced the change of which we are speaking. They have abandoned courses of evil which they had before eagerly pursued, resisted temptations to which they had yielded, and been eminent examples of meekness, spirituality, benevolence to men, and zeal for the glory of God.

And who exhibit the greatest magnanimity? Those who give indulgence to unhallowed affections, or those, who by the grace of God, labor to exterminate them? Those who live after the course of this world, or those who are crucified to it by the cross of Christ, and strive to "perfect holiness in the fear of God?"

These inquiries admit of but one answer. There is no magnanimity in self-indulgence—in following the corrupt inclinations of the heart; but there is real greatness in Christian self-denial—in the victories of holiness over sin. There is real moral grandeur and heroism in cutting off the right hand and plucking out the right eye that offend, and governing the heart and life by God's holy and immutable law.

II. The greatness of the Christian spirit is evident from its superiority to the principles, spirit, and practices of this world. Many of the practices in which the men of the world indulge—many of the maxims by which they regulate their conduct and prevailing spirit, are in direct conflict with God's requirements. With them, pecuniary advantage, honor, or the indulgence of the appetites and passions, separately or combined, is the paramount object; and, provided the pursuit of it be so conducted as not to transgress human law, many seem to think they have done nothing deserving censure, even though the feelings of others are outraged

and their rights disregarded. If, in the pursuit of their favorite objects, they do not transgress human law, they take it for granted they do not the Divine. That an act may be legally right, and at the same time morally wrong, seems not to have entered their minds. With many, public opinion, however erroneous, and human law, though in direct conflict with the Divine, constitute the standard of morality. Hence the pleas so often urged in vindication of the traffic in intoxicating drinks, divorce on the most trifling grounds, the desecration of the Sabbath, public amusements of corrupting tendency, licentiousness, and offensive war. Nay, duelling, suicide, the holding of men "for filthy lucre's sake," in involuntary bondage, and converting them into mere "goods and chattels," and even the accursed slave-trade, have their advocates.

We rejoice to state that many, who prefer no claim to the possession of the Christian spirit, hold the things just mentioned in utter detestation. They are distinguished for the exercise of the humane and social affections, have a keen sense of justice and honor, and are noble examples of a disinterested love of country. But these amiable attributes of character, notwithstanding they give their chief attention and regards to the interests of this world, and live as exclusively to themselves and the objects of their selfish attachment, as if there were no God to whom they owe their supreme homage. They refuse to deny themselves for His sake, and offer to Him the sacrifice of humble and grateful hearts. They form their plans, transact their business, and seek their own pleasure, to the utter neglect of the great end for which He dignified them with a rational and immortal existence. This class of amiable rejecters of the claims of God to their love and service, embraces many who seem wholly to overlook the necessity of right motives and affections to render actions, which are correct in form, acceptable to God. Provided their words are truthful and kind, and their visible deportment correct, they pass no sentence of condemnation upon themselves, though pride, envy, discontent, impure affections, and enmity, burn and rankle in their bosoms.

Infinitely superior to the system of the world's ethics, is the course to which the Christian spirit prompts men. So far as they are influenced by it, they do not inquire whether an act or course of conduct have the sanction of human law or public opinion, but whether it be right?—whether the Word of God approve it? **Him** they strive to please and honor. To receive His approbation and promote His glory, they cheerfully sacrifice their ease and pleasure, their worldly interest, and the friendship of men. Abraham, when called of God to leave "Urr of the Chaldees," and his kindred, for a land to him unknown, obeyed the heavenly mandate, and "went out, not knowing whither he went." By

this act, he exposed himself to the world's reproach and scorn; but the opinion of men had little influence with him, when it contravened the will of God. Moses, when a candidate for the highest honors of the court of Egypt, "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the *reproach* of Christ *greater riches* than the treasures in Egypt." Nehemiah, when urged by his friends to seek safety, in an hour of peril, by deserting the post of duty and concealing himself in the courts of the temple, with heroic decision of purpose and real magnanimity of soul, replied: "Should such a man as I flee? and who is there that being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in." When the apostles, after having been prohibited by the high-priest and elders to preach Christ to the people, persisted in their work, they justified themselves by appealing to the authority under which they acted. "We *ought*," said they, "to obey *God* rather than *man*." Upon this principle, Paul, the Reformers, our Puritan forefathers, and "the noble army of the martyrs," acted. They cheerfully sacrificed the honors, the pleasures, the possessions and friendships of the world, in order to serve God and secure an inheritance in His kingdom. They looked beyond "the things which are seen and temporal, to those that are unseen and eternal."

And who exhibit most true dignity and greatness? those who act in accordance with the maxims, the spirit, and the ethics of the world, or those who make the Word of God the rule of duty?—those who forego eternal joys for momentary gratifications, or those who sacrifice the latter when they conflict with the claims of the former?—those who live to themselves, or those who make it their governing aim, though at the sacrifice of what they hold most dear on earth, to glorify and enjoy God? No candid person can be at a loss for an answer to these inquiries.

III. The Christian spirit exhibits its moral grandeur and magnanimity under the infliction of unprovoked injuries. Under malevolent treatment, the spirit of the world is bitter and vindictive. Its subjects, even when restrained by education, conscience, public opinion, or the supremacy of law from avenging their wrongs, they awaken implacable hatred toward the authors of them. Were opportunities afforded and restraints to be removed, their causeless injuries would be visited by speedy and terrible retribution. Not unfrequently they have been. Examples are not wanting of individuals, suffering under real or imaginary injuries, who have watched for years for an opportunity to avenge them. When it occurred, they seized it as the tiger pounces on his prey, and left the victims of their hate lifeless or convulsed with their final agony.

Such are not the fruits of the Christian spirit. These consist in

the cheerful forgiveness of injuries, and deeds of kindness toward their authors, prompted by holy and benevolent affections. The glorious Founder of our religion, not only forbids us to render evil for evil, but requires us to overcome evil with good, and to exercise toward enemies a meek and forgiving spirit. "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." These are the laws of His blessed Kingdom. Such importance does He attach to these and similar commands, that He has made obedience to them the condition of obtaining forgiveness of our heavenly Father. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Nay, in the prayer which He taught His disciples, we find this emphatic petition, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." He requires us when we pray for forgiveness from God, to give a solemn bond, the penalty of violating which, is eternal condemnation, that we will forgive others as we pray to be forgiven. Such morality,—morality so utterly at variance with the maxims, spirit, and usages of the world—may well claim a celestial origin.

Examples of such a spirit are not wanting. The persecuted apostle of the Gentiles could in truth say for himself and his suffering brethren, "Being reviled we bless; being persecuted we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat." From the records of ecclesiastical history we learn that the Jews became so incensed at the apostle James because he preached that Jesus was the Messiah, that they put him to a violent death; and that while suffering its agonies, he earnestly prayed that they might be forgiven. Stephen, when dying under a shower of stones, which his enemies poured upon him, "kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord lay not this sin to their charge." Examples of this sort were not confined to the apostolic age. The dark and suffering periods of persecution abounded with them. And, much as the lack of the spirit of Christian forgiveness in the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus is to be deplored, we believe it has, in centuries gone by, existed, and that it now exists among them to a far greater extent than the children of disobedience are willing to admit. One example I cannot forbear to notice.

David Brainerd, after asking forgiveness from one of whom he had spoken disrespectfully, adds, "God has made me willing to do anything that I can do consistent with truth, for the sake of peace, and that it might not be a stumbling-block to others. For this reason, I can cheerfully forego and give up what I verily believe, after the most mature and impartial search, is my right in some instances. God has given me the disposition, that if a man has done me an hundred injuries, and I, (though ever so much

provoked to it,) have done him only one, I feel disposed and heartily willing humbly to confess my fault to him, and on my knees to ask forgiveness of him, though at the same time he should justify himself in all the injuries he has done me, and should only make use of my humble confession to blacken my character the more, and represent me as the only person guilty; yea, though he should as it were insult me, and say, he knew all this before, and that I was making work for repentance." But we have a more illustrious example of a forgiving spirit than is furnished by the lives of Paul, or Stephen, or James, or Brainerd. When the incarnate Son of God was expiring upon the cross in unutterable agony, amidst the taunts and insults of His murderers, He prayed, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Compared with the meek, forgiving spirit of the gospel, that of the irascible and vindictive spirit of the world is abject meanness. The difference between them was well expressed by one, whose friend when smarting under an injury, inquired whether he did not think it would be *manly* to avenge it. He replied, "I think it would be *man-like* to avenge, and *God-like* to forgive it. There is real magnanimity of soul,—a moral grandeur in acts of Christian forgiveness,—which make the avenging of injuries and the chivalrous deeds of the world's heroes and conquerors, appear degrading and even contemptible.

IV. The magnanimity of the Christian spirit is shown by the support and consolation which it gives in seasons of sorrow and pain, and the victory which it achieves over the king of terrors. It enabled those ancient worthies, of whom such honorable mention is made in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, patiently to suffer "cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment," and armed their souls with holy fortitude when "stoned, sawn asunder, tempted and slain with the sword." Job, sustained by this spirit, as he sat down amidst the ruins of all his earthly comforts, with celestial composure and peace, said, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." Fortified by this spirit, David, when his life was unrighteously sought by his enemies, triumphantly exclaimed, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock." Under the sustaining power of this spirit Paul, even when his bosom was pervaded with a sense of his own weakness, exultingly said, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me." It enabled him and his suffering brethren amidst want, weariness, scorn, enmity, and persecution, "to glory in tribulation," and in the language of assured faith to say

"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Thousands of the possessors of this spirit, when bending in the agony of grief, over dying friends and kindred, and over their graves when dead, have sweetly acquiesced in the will of God. The feeling of their hearts has been, "Not *our* will, but *thine* be done." And signal have been the victories which it has gained over the cruel spoiler, death. The sweet Psalmist of Israel said, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." In anticipation of his departure from the world, Asaph thus expressed his soul-sustained confidence in God: "My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." Paul panting to enjoy the Saviour's presence in heaven, said, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ." In the prospect of his speedy removal to eternity, he was enabled to say, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." This victory over death was not the exclusive privilege and achievement of saints, endowed with the gift of inspiration. Since that ~~was~~ withdrawn, thousands have died in the triumphs of faith in Jesus. And they have embraced all ages and every grade of intellect and variety of native temper and education. It would be delightful to contemplate the victory of many of them over the king of terrors, but our limits allow us to notice only a few.

Nathan W. Dickerman, an uncommonly lovely and interesting child, died in the eighth year of his age. During his long and painful sickness, he enjoyed great peace in believing in Jesus. To him, death had no terrors. Shortly before he died, he sent this message to an absent friend. "Tell him I'm very happy—my Saviour is precious—and if we don't meet on earth again, I hope we shall meet in heaven."

Catharine Brown, whose conversion was one of the early fruits of missionary labor among the Cherokee Indians, died young. When it became evident that her final hour on earth was near, she said, "I feel perfectly resigned to the will of God. I know He will do right with His children. I thank God that I am entirely in His hands. I feel willing to live or die, as He thinks best. My only wish is that He may be glorified."

The widow of the late Rev. Dr. Blatchford, of Lansingburgh, who through a long life was an ornament to her sex, and an honor to humanity and evangelical religion, in the early part of her last sickness, suffered some disquietude of mind, under a sense of her own unworthiness. But the Sun of Righteousness soon dispelled the gloom. "Now," said she, "I enjoy not merely a glimpse,

but a full blaze of the divine glory as revealed to me through Christ. I dared to hope and pray only for *peace*, that I might be delivered from darkness, but O, it is the *fulness of joy*, the *fulness of joy*. And can it be that I am so blessed? It's wonderful! it's wonderful! matchless condescension! infinite grace!" In the sermon delivered at her funeral, her pastor remarked, "At one time she seemed in a perfect transport of joy in view of her departure. All present were filled with awe, and thought her just about to burst the chains of earth and soar away to the mansions of peace, as she raised her dying hands, and with heaven beaming in her countenance exclaimed, I'm mounting, O I'm mounting! O I desire to see the whole world filled with the glory of God."

The Rev. John Janeway, an accomplished scholar, died in England at the age of twenty-four. During the greater part of his sickness, he seemed to enjoy the bliss of heaven. Shortly before he expired, he said, "Let no Christian ever be afraid of dying. Death is sweet to me. Praise is now my work, and I shall be engaged in that sweet employment for ever. I shall in a few hours be in eternity, singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb."

The late Dr. Payson, when convulsed with agony, said: "While my body is thus tortured, the soul is perfectly happy and peaceful. My soul is filled with joy unspeakable." Multitudes of Christians have died in a similar manner. Infidelity and irreligion *never* obtained such a victory over death. Nothing but the Christian spirit ever did. And what spectacle on earth can be more sublime than that of a feeble mortal vanquishing the king of terrors, by the might of Him "who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel?"

V. We have a further proof of the magnanimity of the Christian spirit, in the benevolence and grandeur of its purposes, and in the labors and sufferings to which it prompts in the execution of them. It leads one to yearn over a world lying in wickedness, and to employ the means which God has ordained to enlighten and save it. Under its constraining power, the apostles went forth and proclaimed in the ears of all to whom they could gain access, the glad tidings of salvation through Immanuel's blood. To this noble work they devoted all their strength and energy, in the face of scorn, enmity, persecution, and all the appalling apparatus of martyrdom. But this age of blessed zeal and triumph was followed by a night of fearful darkness and corruption of more than a thousand years' duration. But the morning-star of the Reformation heralded the dawn of a bright and blessed day, whose beams of hope and promise it is our exalted privilege to behold. Far removed as the Church is from the elevation of Christian attainment which she ought to have reached, it cannot be denied that

during the last half century there has been a great increase of the missionary spirit. In the minds of thousands of the disciples of the Lord Jesus, the purpose is formed in reliance upon His grace, while life shall last, to labor and pray for the conversion of the world, and the training up of the succeeding generation to carry forward the work when their bodies shall moulder in the dust. For the accomplishment of the grand and God-like purpose of spreading the gospel through the world, hundreds of thousands of dollars are yearly contributed, a large proportion of which is from the hard earnings of industry and the scanty pittance of the poor. Since this new era of missions commenced, hundreds of devoted men and women have gone to distant, barbarous continents and islands to make known to their benighted and perishing population the salvation of the gospel. Constrained by the love of Christ, they cheerfully bid adieu to country and kindred, cross oceans, penetrate inhospitable and insalubrious regions, and expose themselves to piercing cold and scorching heat, and all the privations, hardships, and sufferings of savage life. Many of them have already fallen victims to incessant toils and insalubrious climate; and some by the hand of savage violence. Still, those who survive are not disheartened or dismayed. They are now prosecuting their benevolent, self-denying labors amidst the frosts and snows of Labrador and Greenland, and on the burning plains of Asia and Africa. Prophecy assures us this spirit shall live and increase till the glad tidings of salvation shall have been published to all people.

Who has not admired the fortitude and enterprise of those who, for the sake of discovery or gain, have traversed unknown oceans, circumnavigated the globe, and penetrated into the heart of unexplored and barbarous kingdoms? Their boldness of purpose, their fortitude under suffering, their heroism in danger, and perseverance against seemingly insuperable difficulties, have won for them the admiration of the world. The daring purposes and enterprises of ambition, have done the same for their authors. Napoleon sought to bring all Europe and part of Asia and Africa under his control; and Alexander achieved the conquest of the world. By their bold and comprehensive plans and purposes, and their indomitable resolution and untiring perseverance, they secured to themselves the honors of an earthly immortality. But what were *their* purposes and exploits in the scale of moral grandeur, compared with those which Christian love has originated! In importance to mankind, what are travels and voyages of discovery, and the acquisitions of science and gains of commerce, secured by them, compared with the blessings of the gospel of peace? The advantages of the former are limited to the present transient state of existence: those of the latter are eternal. And the former have often been procured by acts of injustice and vio-

lence. For what purpose did Alexander and Bonaparte labor to extend their power and authority over the nations? Not to *bless*, but to make them subservient to their own low ambition and pleasure. Both made their way to empire through countries desolated by their armies, over the ruins of pillaged and conflagrated towns and cities—over the gory, lifeless bodies of slaughtered millions, and amidst the tears and sighs of those whom they had bereaved.

The Christian spirit seeks the conquest of the world, not to *enslave*, but to *emancipate* it; not to curse, but to enrich it with the choicest blessings. Although it does not seek, as its main end, the temporal amelioration of mankind, yet its humane and benevolent work will not be fully accomplished till all the forms of despotism on earth give place to free and righteous governments; till fraud and oppression shall cease; till the last accursed slave-ship shall retire from the coast of injured, bleeding Africa, and all her enslaved children shall be made free; till the blessings of civilization and science shall be diffused throughout the world; and “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

Did the spirit of Christian benevolence contemplate nothing more than the emancipation of mankind from temporal evils, and putting them in possession of the blessings of civilization, science, and of free and equitable governments, all other schemes of good compared with this enterprise, would have little to command admiration. But these temporal benefits of Christianity, great and invaluable as they are, do not constitute its chief mission. The spirit of Christian benevolence contemplates men mainly in their relations to God and the world of eternal retribution; as rational and immortal beings, ruined by sin, and offered salvation in the gospel. Through the medium of the revelation which God has given, it views them as destitute of holiness, and obnoxious to His eternal curse, and yet as candidates for the bliss and glory of heaven. While it weeps over their sin and peril of perdition, it taxes its energies to the utmost, to convey to every member of our fallen race the welcome message that he may nevertheless be pardoned, and purified, and exalted to the more than princely dignity of a son of God, and made heir “to an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens.” Till these glad tidings shall be published in the ears of all our world’s population, accompanied by all the tenderness and power of Christian entreaty, and the supplicating energy of prayer, that these means may be blessed to their salvation, the object of its benevolent desires and purposes will not have been attained. In respect to moral grandeur, all others have “no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth.”

My brethren, do we realize the dignity and obligations of our high calling? The littleness of dishonesty, falsehood, vindictive-

ness, and the love of things earthly for their own sake, we ought not merely to shun, but despise and detest. If we be in reality what we profess to be,—“the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty,” we were made such for great and noble ends. It becomes us to wage an unrelenting war with all sin, overcome the world by faith; to “forgive those who trespass against us” as we hope to be forgiven of God; to labor, contribute of our substance, and pray without ceasing for the spread of the Gospel, and the conversion of the nations. If we thus make evident the validity of our claim to the possession of the Christian spirit, we may hope to be God’s agents in accomplishing his purposes of mercy toward our race, to triumph over the last enemy, and that “an abundant entrance shall be administered to us into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Are there any present who look upon the Christian spirit as degrading to human dignity? Nothing so exalts it. It purifies the heart, achieves the noblest victories, forms, and labors with invincible perseverance, to accomplish the most stupendous purposes of benevolence in respect to the great brotherhood of humanity, and makes its possessor a son and heir of God. Compared with this, all other dignity is meanness. This is the high-born spirit of heaven—the spirit of Him who came from thence and laid down His life a ransom for sinful and dying man. Nothing else will so protect you against the assaults of temptation, sustain you under the heavy pressure of adversity, enable you to “overcome evil with good,” and perform your duty at the sacrifice of ease and interest, and popular favor. Nothing else can give you a victory over death and the grave, and fit you for the society of heaven, and fellowship with God. Embrace it—surrender your souls to its influence—and it will sustain and comfort you under all the toils and sorrows of your mortal pilgrimage, and conduct you to mansions of everlasting glory.

SERMON CCCCXCVIII.

BY REV. JOHN HALL,
Trenton, New Jersey.

THE INIQUITY OF GIBEAH.

"They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah: therefore he will remember their iniquities, he will visit their sin."—HOSEA, 9: 9.

As an aged inhabitant of Gibeah was returning, on a certain evening, from his work in the field to his dwelling in the city, he found a group of travelers resting in one of the streets, as if they could find no place of shelter. The group was composed of a man and a woman and a man-servant, with a couple of asses laden with provisions for the wayfarers; and with straw and provender for the beasts. The old citizen upon enquiring whence they came, and whither they were going, learned that their home was on the side of Mount Ephraim; that they were returning thither from Bethlehem, the residence of the woman's father; that they had passed by Jerusalem, because it was still in possession of the Jebusites, and preferred to spend the night at Gibeah, among their own nation.

The whole truth of the case was, that the man was a Levite, who had taken the woman whose husband he is called, from Bethlehem to his house in Ephraim; that she had deserted him there and returned to her fathers; that after four months her husband sent for her, was reconciled, and was now with her on his way homeward; that they had stopped at Gibeah to lodge, but no one had, as yet, offered them a place of shelter, though private hospitality was, in those days, the only dependence of travelers.

The old man no sooner heard so much of their story as they chose to communicate, than he insisted upon their lodging at his own house, being especially moved in their favor by the fact that he himself had come from Mount Ephraim, and was but a sojourner in Gibeah. His generous salutation was, "Peace be with thee; howsoever, let all thy wants lie upon me, only lodge not in the street. So he brought him into the house and gave provender unto the asses, and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink."

But whilst they were refreshing themselves at this friendly dwelling, the house was beset by a crowd of brutal men, whose outrages surpassed the enormity of common crimes, and terminated in leaving the woman a corpse at the door.

Whatever may have been her character, or that of her husband, the guilt of the ruffians could not be palliated. The Levite felt the case to be so aggravated that nothing less than an appeal to the whole nation could meet the enormity of the offence. Nothing indeed could repair his wrongs ; but he felt as a Jew, that unparalleled disgrace had fallen upon the nation through the act of these Benjamites of Gibeah, and that the whole people were concerned in vindicating the demands of justice. "They have committed lewdness and folly IN ISRAEL," was the Levite's complaint ; and adopting a method of appeal which the feelings of the age allowed, he sent to each of the tribes a bloody fragment of the woman's corpse, as at once evidence of the deed, and a call for their counsel. "And it was so that all that saw it, said : There was no such deed done nor seen from the days that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt, until this day ; consider of it, take advice and speak your minds."

Four hundred thousand men soon assembled, from all the tribes in Mizpeh. The Levite told them his story, and called upon them as Israelites, for advice. The indignant multitude, as with one heart, resolved to proceed at once against the guilty town. They did so ; but not wishing to involve the innocent, they first called upon the tribe of Benjamin (to which Gibeah belonged), to deliver up the persons guilty of the deed of violence and murder. But the tribe, instead of yielding to so just and fraternal a demand, espoused the cause of the murderers and flocked to Gibeah, not only to resist, but to attack the army of Israel. Two battles were fought, in both of which the Benjamites prevailed, and with a dreadful slaughter of the other tribes. This surprising result was probably permitted to correct the feelings of revenge and the spirit of self-confidence with which the tribes had gone into the war. For after the two defeats, they humbled themselves before God with weeping, and fasting, and sacrifices. They were now more likely to feel that it was not as avengers of their own quarrel, but as instruments of Divine justice—not by the might of their superior numbers, but by the strength of God, that they were to purge the land from the iniquity of Gibeah. The city was for the third time attacked. It was now taken and burned, and so small a remnant of the Benjamites escaped, that the tribes turned from the melancholy victory to weep before the tabernacle of God, and cry, "O Lord God of Israel, why is this come to pass in Israel, that there should be to-day one tribe lacking in Israel !"

This is a specimen of the character of the people of Gibeah,

who are referred to in the text; and again in the next chapter, where Hosea exclaims, "O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood, the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them." I call it a specimen of their character, for it would be contrary to all history and analogy, to suppose that this occurrence was a sudden outbreak of crime in a community that had until that period been moral and peaceful. Fully set in them to do evil as the hearts of men are, their passions do not venture to burst through the restraints of decent concealment until they have reason to know that the moral sense of the community will overlook or endure their crimes. The history in fact shows this to have been the case in Gibeah; and the prophet speaks of the "deep corruption" of those days, as if it were characteristic of the people, whom he calls "the children of iniquity." Their infamy had reached to the time of Hosea, a period of at least six hundred and fifty years from the occurrences which have been related; it has come to our knowledge twenty-six hundred years later; it is part of the record which is given by inspiration of God, for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, and therefore it behoves us to revive and apply its lessons for our own benefit. The times in which we live seem to make this example peculiarly appropriate, and I shall therefore occupy the remainder of this discourse in an attempt to secure this advantage.

I. It presents a general warning in reference to the corruption of public morals.

We can imagine what must have been the state of morals in Gibeah—a city of sufficient size to furnish seven hundred chosen men of war—when the dwelling of a citizen could be beset by a licentious mob with all the tumult of a riot, and the ruffians allowed to accomplish their purposes without a hand raised to punish them, or defend the helpless strangers. This is partly to be attributed to the absence of any civil authority; for, says the historian, "in those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes."—(Judges 21: 25.) But had not the public mind been dead to the commonest sentiment of hospitality, honor and virtue, such an outrage could not have been plotted, or been suffered to be perpetrated through several hours of disorder, closing in murder.

All that is wanting in any community to open the gates of vice, is to withhold the penalty of justice from offenders, and to relax the restraints of a pure public sentiment. Let intemperance, for instance, be connived at by the laws, let drunkenness be made a matter of sport, let the opportunities and means of intoxication be multiplied by legislators, or the public functionaries, and let the public themselves esteem intemperate habits as no disqualification for stations of trust and honor, or for the alliances of life—and

nothing more is wanting to secure the triumph of this corruption.

The same thing is true of all other forms of licentiousness—even of that which has given infamy to the name of Gibeah. We need not expunge the seventh commandment from the decalogue in order to give a license to these transgressions. Satan has more art than to suggest such a measure. But let the moral sense of the public allow, under the name of fashion or custom, manners from which even the modesty of nature would shrink; let our dwellings be open to receive publications which minister to an impure curiosity, pollute the mind, and accustom it to criminal recitals; let our children find this kind of entertainment in the newspapers we read and the books we buy; let us be careless as to the associates whom we encourage for ourselves or those within our control; and when great crimes occur let us treat the parties to them as heroes and heroines, attributing their vices to imprudence, or even to their very innocence—by such means as these the corruption of the public morals is sooner secured than if a reward were offered for vice.

If we in this country,—we who live in the large cities or on the great thoroughfares which make accessible to us all the sources of corruption, domestic and foreign, which our large cities attract—if we are in any such danger, let us take timely warning by examples like that of Gibeah. Who shall set bounds to the growth of corruption when it is once suffered to take root? How easy is prevention! how hard is reformation! The authors of the crime recorded in the history before us are called “Sons of Belial.” The race is not extinct; and the imagination of Milton, in depicting the fiend himself, has struck upon some of the most characteristic marks of these corrupters of society:—

“A fairer person lost not Heav’n; he seem’d
For dignity compos’d and high exploit;
But all was false and hollow; though his tongue
Dropt manna, and could make the worse appear
The better reason, to perplex and dash
Maturest counsels: for his thoughts were low;
To vice industrious, but to noble deeds
Timorous and slothful; yet he pleased the ear.”

II. The example of Gibeah shows that a corrupt state of morals is adapted to produce the most flagrant crimes.

The prevailing licentiousness was not satisfied with the secret pursuit of its objects. When the general standard of morality discountenances corrupt manners, the wicked adopt obscure and silent means of accomplishing their ends. Darkness and secrecy veil their habits from observation. But when, as in Gibeah, vice has become to some extent common, and fears no disgrace, it will become bold, both in its excesses and in its publicity. The history of the world

is full of similar examples. We need not go far back, or far off, to find proof that this is the natural course of all sin. Licentiousness, assassination and suicide still hold intimate fellowship. A relaxation of moral principle cannot be confined to one particular. When the fear of God is thrown off as to one indulgence, what motive is left strong enough to restrain the corrupt heart from other crimes to which it is tempted. The bonds of religion and of society are rotted by such corruption, and can no longer serve either for union or restraint. Let the principles of common integrity, for example, become relaxed; let men adopt the idea that there is no obligation as to their contracts and debts, if their responsibility can be evaded by legal forms; let this idea be adopted by governments, and the contracts of a commonwealth be annulled by statute, and its creditors defrauded by law, and a blow is struck at the very foundation of right and honesty, the result of which will soon be perceived in the general imbecility of moral principle in the community which sanctions or abides by such laws. Who can contemplate without amazement and shame the state of morals in our own country in this respect, compared with what it was before the late financial revolution disclosed the corruption that had been secretly spreading throughout our whole community? And who is not conscious that the discovery has tended to encourage the evil, and blunt our sensibilities to its enormity?

III. The case of Gibeah furnishes a forcible illustration of the danger of giving any manner of countenance to iniquity.

The Benjamites, though the crime at Gibeah was so notorious, took no steps to punish the transgressors. When the other tribes appealed to Benjamin, and asked, as by the polity and customs of the nation they had a right to do, that the offenders should be delivered to them for punishment, they refused; and not only refused either to bring them to punishment themselves or to yield them up as public criminals, but immediately took measures to oppose the army of the nation by force. Thus they avowed the cause of the authors of the iniquity, and practically sanctioned their conduct. Thus they afford another exemplification of the extent to which moral corruption will carry a community. First, the citizens of Gibeah allow the violence and riot to proceed throughout a whole night unchecked; then the crime is passed by with impunity; and finally the whole tribe to which Gibeah belonged espouse the part of the murderers, and commence a civil war for their protection.

The first step was wrong, and therefore all that followed was wrong. The admonition which we ought to receive is of the sin and danger of allowing protection to any iniquity. Communities may furnish this protection, not only by openly espousing the cause of the violators of law, and forcibly rescuing them from

punishment, but also by approving their course, exciting a clamor in their behalf, and expressing such a sympathy for the criminal as absorbs the regard due to justice and to the whole interests of the community; and above all, due to the holiness of God and His condemnation of all sin.

Civil society is founded for the protection of all its members. The administration of justice is consigned by common consent to the public tribunals; and the laws which these tribunals administer are those which the society has adopted as their compact and bond of union. Now this bond is as nothing unless the community which have thus associated themselves, submit to the dominion of their own laws, and sustain their impartial execution, so long as they remain their laws. They may change them in a constitutional manner; but so long as they exist every member of the body politic is under the most sacred obligations to obey and uphold them. They are the laws—not of the judges and juries and the executive—but the laws of the people, and these others are but their servants to apply them. He therefore cannot be a faithful citizen who attempts either to violate the law himself, or to prevent its just administration towards others.

The laws under which we live are so humane that no exception from this principle is admissible on the ground that the circumstances of a crime often demand the exercise of mercy. This may be true. But the laws provide for such cases; and even mercy should be granted legally, and not demanded or compelled by violence. The trial by jury, the gradation of punishment, the prerogative of pardon vested in the Executive, are the legal provision for the adjudication of the penalty of transgressions. If it is an outrage on all law and authority for individuals to redress their own wrongs, or those of the public, by violence, without the trial of the criminal, it is no less an offence to screen a criminal from the operation of the law, or to rejoice in his escape.

We are guilty of encouraging iniquity when we justify crimes on the ground of the temptations and provocations which led to them. No good law allows such grounds of justification; though they may be admitted to qualify the heinousness of the offence. The desperation of hunger may drive a man to robbery. The law will not hold him guiltless on this account; but it will mitigate his punishment, and vindicate its own purity, even if by no more than a nominal infliction. So the heat of passion may impel a man to take the life of another without previous deliberation. But though this characteristic of his offence may exempt him from the fate of the wilful murderer, it requires the severe punishment of the homicide in another form. For law is established on the very ground that the injuries which men may receive are not to be avenged by their own hands, but by the calm and just adjudication of the laws which they themselves framed or

have voluntarily submitted to. If, therefore a man is injured, in person or property or reputation, he may not retaliate, or use violence to recover his rights, or redress his injuries, but he must seek his rights or redress in the way which he solemnly agreed to employ when he entered into the social compact; and if it should happen that the law is defective in the particular point of his wrong, he must abide the consequences of the oversight—he is bound to abstain from any private force to obtain his end. Once admit the principle that temptations or provocations, however great and extraordinary, authorize a man to avenge his own wrongs, and we take away the corner-stone of justice and of civilization; we dissolve the compact, and put the community into the disorganized condition of savage life, where every man is his own judge, and the only law is that of force.

If we should admit such a principle, where could we draw the line between what is criminal and what is justifiable? What great crimes are ever committed without temptation or provocation? Revenge, covetousness, jealousy, and lust, are the sources of nearly all the enormous crimes which bring men to the gibbet or the prison. But are not all these founded in the strongest influences of temptation and provocation? How shall we distinguish between the degrees of strength with which these dispositions impel a man to sin? How can we feel safe in determining that the passion which urged one man to commit an enormous crime was not so strong or so natural as that which impelled another to avenge it!

No! we may sympathize with the injured, and have our indignation aroused against the wrong-doer; but we must say to the sufferer—Your hand is not the proper instrument to redress the wrong; the sin of another against you will not justify your sin against him, against the law of the land, and against God; and if as a Christian you will not forgive, and if as a good citizen you feel obliged to bring the offender to justice, you should take those steps which the laws prescribe for your guidance. We must sympathize with the laws, and with our families and society at large, which depend on their protection, as well as with the injured party. The Benjamites had great sympathy for the murderers whom justice demanded, but they had none for the man whose wife had been savagely destroyed, nor for the aged citizen who had showed them hospitality, and participated in their injuries.

It is to the withholding of public justice that we may in part attribute the growing disposition to seek revenge without invoking the arm of justice. Let the penalties of law be withheld, and the temptation to acts of private retaliation become greatly increased. Had not the Levite placed so much confidence in his nation, he might naturally have preferred to become the incendiary of Gibeah,

rather than submit his wrongs to the redress of a national council.

And if these principles are just as to the punishment of ordinary offences, they much more forcibly apply to those which aim at the life of one who has injured us. A man is deeply injured in his reputation or his feelings, by the misconduct of another. But upon what principle of right or morals that can claim the sanction of God's Word, or human legislation, is the injured man himself authorized to take the life of the offender by assassination, or required to meet him in combat with deadly weapons? And upon what ground shall we justify ourselves, if, by our approbation, we sanction this course, and seek to screen the self-avenger from punishment—or what is equivalent, desire and rejoice in his escape from it? The laws of God and of our country coincide in these points—first, that no man in the social state is permitted to avenge his wrongs;—whoever wrongs another is amenable to the laws which provide the means of punishment and compensation, so far as any human power can afford them;—and second, that no man has a right to take the life of another save through absolute necessity, in defence of himself, or those naturally committed to his care; but that the prerogative of taking life, as a penalty for crime, is to be the deliberate and solemn act of public justice. When the taking of life is excused, it is where it is done to *prevent* the execution of a wicked purpose, and not where it is done in vengeance for a crime already committed. From the rule of these principles no sane man is exempted. No provocation, however strong, can justify in the view of Divine law, or any human laws that profess to regard the Divine as supreme, the exercise of personal vengeance; and the community that ventures to say of this or that duel or assassination it was right because one party had a great provocation, participates in the same kind of sin as that which brought destruction on the Benjamites.

The great mistake into which a community are apt to fall on such occasions, is in not distinguishing between what is really deserved by the wretch who has excited their indignation, and the lawful methods of inflicting what he deserves. We are apt to overlook the departure from justice in the mode of administering it, through the consciousness that the guilty person has received nothing but what his crimes merited. Thus, when mobs have undertaken to expel gamblers from a village by force, or when notorious and savage offenders have been in that way seized and punished, even with death, the abhorrence which the unlawful acts of the mob ought to excite seems often to be displaced by the satisfaction that society has been, by any means, rid of such pests. So we are in danger of nullifying law and justice, in their only right and safe administration, when we are disposed to account a man blameless because he has stepped forth in advance of, and in

place of the law, and by a summary act of his own private vengeance, ridden the world of a villain. But this is all wrong. It is a confounding of justice and revenge, and an apology for evil because it promises to be productive of good.

The effects of such sentiments in encouraging violence, in making a criminal the object of public sympathy, in degrading the laws and relaxing the securities of society, are too obvious to require detail. It is equally evident that they are sins against God, whose law is the foundation of ours; who requires of us as a Christian duty, to submit to this authority, as ordained by Him as a terror to the evil, and who forbids us to be partakers of other men's sins. The great question in every such case is, who is the authorized avenger of the wrong? Do the law of God or of man say, that the next of kin or of friendship is entitled to redress the injury inflicted? Does either of those laws say a man may take with his own hands the life of one who has done him an injury, however great that injury be? If there be no such law in the Bible or in the statute-book, then no man can claim to be acquitted who exercises such an authority; and the public sentiment that sustains him must be wrong, though it may be benevolent. The provocation may have been great, and this should have its due weight in the gradation of his crime; but it cannot make him innocent. What provocation could be greater than that which Absalom had towards Ammon, whom he put to death in revenge of a wrong to his own sister? But for that offence he was banished from the presence of the king, his father; and though indulged, after several years, with a pardon, through the parental favor of the monarch, it was not long before a more impartial and higher hand exhibited the fratricide in the position of a murderer on the tree—as if God would compel men to enforce his precept, “whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” I know that those who vindicate these opinions in our day, are sometimes denounced as sanguinary, and as exhibiting a spirit very opposite to that of the gospel. We are told that the world has grown wiser and more humane since the days in which God declared, “Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death;” and history records the act of a monarch who was bold enough to introduce an edict remitting the penalty of murder by a preamble, stating his purpose to “moderate the rigor of the Divine law.”* But I tremble at this additional evidence of a perverted public sentiment, when it says in opposition to what God has said—this shall not be so. I of course include in these remarks those only who reject the divine statute on the grounds which I have mentioned, and not those who conscientiously, but as I believe erroneously, suppose that this was not intended to be a universal and perpetual requirement.

* See Blackstone's Commentaries, iv : 194.

And as to all that has been said under this head, lest it should be supposed that any particular cases are exclusively in view, I must add, that however seasonable such cases make this course of remark, reference is had to a state of public sentiment which has obviously been increasing for several years in our country, and the tendency of which is to excuse men, individually, or in mobs, in their resorts to violence to redress injuries for which the common processes of law are supposed to be too tardy and too uncertain, or their penalties too light.

IV. The fate of the Benjamites warns us of the sure consequences of iniquity. "They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah; therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins."

The destruction of such a multitude of persons as were involved in the ruin of Gibeah, is, as we have seen, not to be attributed to the single crime against the stranger from Ephraim, but to the general corruption of the people, which only developed itself in that act and in the protection which was given to it by the whole tribe. If it were necessary to offer any suggestion in vindication of any of the Divine judgments, it might be asserted and proved from history, both sacred and common, that such corruption as was manifested there, when it attains to this height, can only be removed by extirpation. The appeals of truth, the threatenings of the law of God or man, do not reach the hearts of men who, in opposition to all their knowledge and consciousness, sink themselves in pollution, and relax the commonest restraints of morality. It was mercy to the world that has exterminated, from time to time, a corruption which would have spread and perpetuated itself like a leprosy, and have brought the race to an end. It was mercy to mankind—mercy to us—that rolled the deluge over the earth, that sent fire from the clouds upon the cities of the plain, and that destroyed a tribe of Israel. Had not Benjamin been cut off, the whole nation might have perished in the same corruption. The New Testament repeatedly assures us that these events are recorded for "our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted," nor "tempt Christ as some of them also tempted," for "all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition; wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Again, referring to the fall of the angels, the flood, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Scriptures say that these judgments made them "an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." And it is worthy of our notice that in this very passage, the apostle, after speaking of the filthy conversation of the wicked, and the unlawful deeds which vexed the soul of the righteous Lot, or called forth the rebukes of Noah, the "preacher of righteousness," applies the

admonition directly to all impenitent evil-doers, as sure to meet their retribution at the day of judgment—"but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and *despise governments*; presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities." And another apostle, making precisely the same references to history, thus characterizes those in his own day who were provoking the same judgments—"these dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities."

Let us beware, then, of the results of sin; whether committed by ourselves, or connived at in others. Let us be careful that in contributing a share to the formation of public opinion, we hold no sentiments that are at variance with the Divine standard of holiness and truth; and that we never countenance sin in our own practice, or by the approbation of it in others. And if no better motive shall deter us, let us fear to provoke the wrath of Heaven on ourselves and on our country. "He will remember iniquities, and visit sins." He is a God of grace and of love; of long-suffering and great patience, but He is a just and holy God. He will not endure iniquity; and if it is persisted in, encouraged and rejoiced in, He will, he must visit the offenders.

Although the tenor of this discourse is in some respects less evangelical than is usual, I cannot think that, if properly improved, its tendency can be otherwise than to make a deep impression on our minds of the corruption of our nature; the evil and danger of sin, and the necessity of a Divine power to change our nature, rectify our errors, and furnish and apply a means of justification beyond our own capacity to provide. And it seems to me that I can, at the close of such a discourse, introduce the blessed name of CHRIST with peculiar appropriateness and emphasis. Turn from the scenes of violence and corruption that have been suggested to our minds by what has been said, and view the spotless Saviour, the holy, harmless, and undefiled Son of God! View Him in His love and mercy, as He came to live in such a world as this, and to die for such a race; to pardon such transgressions, and to provide the means of renewing and purifying such hearts! See the violence and blindness of our nature illustrated, in the conduct of those who nailed Him to a cross—but see in the streaming blood, and hear in His dying prayers, the means of atonement and intercession! Let the tendency of the world be what it may, let the days be approaching as fast as they may, when iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold; when judgment is turned away backward and justice standeth afar off, because truth is fallen in the street and equity cannot enter—yes, let even the Divine forbearance cease, and Heaven's judgments fall upon the earth; he that is in Christ shall fear no evil; in His righteousness

shall he stand accepted, and His arm shall uphold him until he is safe beyond the reach of earthly corruption.

Make haste to secure this refuge. Come out, come out from among them, and be ye separate saith the Lord; and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

CHRISTIANS AND ANGELS.

THE angels take the liveliest interest in matters pertaining to man's salvation; they are anxious spectators of the race which he is running; the guardian and ministering spirits of the heirs of salvation; and rejoice over every "sinner that repenteth" with a universal and a great rejoicing. What a rebuke is this to the dullness and apathy and neglect of too many Christians!

The angels in Heaven and Christians on earth, have one and the same great interest, and grand theme, to enlist and call forth their love and service. And hence they should have a fellow-feeling. The desire, the anxiety, the joy of angels ought to be the desire, the anxiety, the joy of every good man. Christians ought to look upon sinners with the pity of angels, yearn over them with the tenderness and solicitude of angels, and joy over their salvation with the joy of angels. Redemption should so awake our sensibilities, and sway such a power over our minds and hearts, that the sight of a fellow-sinner plucked from endless ruin and recovered to God and life, should give us the highest joy—thrill our being as nothing else can do. Earthly joy, earthly gain, earthly triumphs, what are they all worth in the scales with an immortal soul, made in the image of God—made for happiness, glory and endless life—converted from the error of his ways and made an heir of glory? When all beneath the sun has been reduced to ashes, that soul will rise to God, resplendent in moral worth and beauty, and shine for ever in glory, as a star of the Redeemer's crown. The salvation of the meanest sinner that ever lived on earth, is worth all the treasures of tears and toil and blood, that the Christian church has ever poured out at the feet of Jesus.

Is this the feeling of Christians? Is concern for the sinner made the great concern of their hearts? Do their souls melt and rejoice over a repentant sinner with a celestial feeling? Have we as Christians, adequate views of the worth of the soul; of the extent of the ruin which sin has brought upon it; and of the need and preciousness of its redemption? Is *salvation* the theme of themes with us? Does it set the heart on fire—inspire the tongue, nerve the soul, and command life's best and noblest service? Alas! must we not confess to an apathy here that is the grief and sorrow of angels? We do not fully enter into the spirit of the thrilling scenes which are transpiring in this apostate and gospel-world. We do not half feel for sinners who are perishing eternally on every hand—in our streets, in our sanctuaries, in our own dwellings. We do not wait and watch for the repentance of sinners, and pour out the full tide of the heart's gratitude and joy when any are found returning to give glory to God. We do not put our hearts in living contact with the cross of Christ, and fully fellowship its sympathy and travail and agony and joy and glory in the blessed work of saving sinners. Oh, that we had the spirit of Christ—the spirit of angels! Then would one great thought—the rescuing of souls from sin and death—engross our minds, enlist every faculty and energy, and constrain a willing, undivided, untiring service for God and salvation.